

## CLAIMS

- 1 1. A group-based search engine for locating web pages, comprising:  
2 a system for associating a user group with a web search; and  
3 a search system for generating a list of search results ordered by a ranking in  
4 response to the web search, wherein the ranking is based on at least one nomination  
5 previously made by a member of the user group.
  
- 1 2. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for logging in  
2 as a member of the user group.
  
- 1 3. The group-based search engine of claim 2, further comprising a system for nominating  
2 a selected web page.
  
- 1 4. The group-based search engine of claim 3, wherein the nominating system causes the  
2 selected web page to have an increased priority in the ranking of future search results.
  
- 1 5. The group-based search engine of claim 3, wherein the nominating system causes the  
2 selected web page to be excluded from future search results.

1       6. The group-based search engine of claim 3, wherein the nominating system causes the  
2       selected web page to be listed in future search results for logged-in user group members  
3       only.

1       7. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for  
2       highlighting search results in the list that point to web pages recently visited by other user  
3       group members.

1       8. The group-based search engine of claim 2, further comprising a system for un-  
2       nominating a selected web page.

1       9. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for creating a  
2       new user group.

1       10. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for adding  
2       new members to the user group.

1 11. A program product stored on a recordable medium for interfacing with a search  
2 engine to return a list of search results, comprising:  
3       means for registering with a group;  
4       means for submitting a search string to the search engine;  
5       means for viewing the list of search results based on a ranking, wherein any  
6 search result previously nominated by a group member as a high priority is ranked above  
7 un-nominated search results; and  
8       means for nominating a current search result from the list of search results.

1 12. The program product of claim 11, wherein said means for nominating a current  
2 search result includes means for nominating the search result as a high priority.

1 13. The program product of claim 11, wherein said means for nominating a current  
2 search result includes means for excluding the current search result from a future list of  
3 search results.

1 14. The program product of claim 11, wherein said means for nominating a current  
2 search result includes means for identifying the current search result as available only to  
3 members of the group.

1       15. The program product of claim 11, further comprising means for interfacing with a  
2       plurality of search engines using a common set of group data, wherein the common set of  
3       group data includes registration and nomination information for the group.

1       16. The program product of claim 11, wherein the means for submitting a search string  
2       includes means for associating the search string with the group.

1       17. The program product of claim 11, wherein the means for viewing the list of search  
2       results includes means for viewing a highlighted search result, wherein the highlighted  
3       search result identifies a web page previously visited by a member of the group.

1           18. A search system for performing group-based searches, comprising:  
2                   a client system having a browser and a search engine plug-in, wherein the search  
3                   engine plug-in allows group members to generate nomination data by nominating web  
4                   pages; and  
5                   a server having a control program and a group structure for storing nomination  
6                   data, wherein the control program generates a primary search result list based on a search  
7                   index, and further refines the search result list based on the stored nomination data.

1           19. The search system of claim 18, wherein the plug-in causes a nominate button to be  
2                   displayed with each web page displayed by the browser.

1           20. The search system of claim 18, wherein the nomination data includes selected web  
2                   pages nominated as having a higher priority, and the control program refines the search  
3                   result list by listing the selected web pages first.

1           21. The search system of claim 18, wherein the nomination data includes selected web  
2                   pages nominated as excluded, and the control program refines the search result list by not  
3                   listing the selected web pages.

22. The search system of claim 18, wherein the nomination data includes selected web pages nominated as private, and the control program refines the search result list by not listing the selected web pages for non-members.

23. The search system of claim 18, wherein the group structure further includes visitation data regarding which web pages group members visited.

24. The search system of claim 23, wherein the control program causes a result in the primary search result list to be highlighted based on the visitation data.

1           25. A method for performing a group-based search, comprising:  
2                   providing a browser and a search engine plug-in on a client system;  
3                   logging in as a member of a group using the browser;  
4                   submitting a search request to a search engine server;  
5                   searching a search index and returning a primary search result list; and  
6                   refining the primary search result list based on nomination data collected from  
7                   members of the group.

1           26. The method of claim 25, further comprising:  
2                   nominating a web page at the client system;  
3                   transmitting nomination data to the search engine server; and  
4                   storing the nomination data in a group structure.  
1           27. The method of claim 26, wherein nominating the web page includes indicating a  
2                   higher priority for the web page and wherein refining the primary search result list  
3                   includes listing the nominated web page with a higher priority.  
1           28. The method of claim 26, wherein nominating the web page includes indicating the  
2                   web page as excluded, and wherein refining the primary search result list includes  
3                   excluding the web page from the primary search result list.

1           29. The method of claim 26, wherein nominating the web page includes indicating the  
2           web page as private, and wherein refining the primary search result list includes  
3           excluding the web page from the primary search result list for non-members.

1           30. The method of claim 25, further comprising the further steps of:  
2           tracking web pages visited by group members; and  
3           wherein the step of refining the primary search result list includes highlighting  
4           visited web pages.